Numb. 43.

The EXAMINER.

From Thursday *May* 17, to Thursday *May* 24, 1711.

Delicta majorum immeritus lues,
Romane; donec templa refeceris,
Ædesq; labentes deorum;——

SEveral Letters have been lately ſent me, deſiring I would make Honourable mention of the pious Deſign of building Fifty Churches, in ſeveral parts of *London* and *Weſtminſter*, where they are moſt wanted; occaſion'd by an Addreſs of the *Convocation* to the Queen, and recommended by Her Majeſty to the Houſe of Commons; who immediately promis'd, they *would enable* Her *to accompliſh ſo excellent a Deſign*, and are now preparing a Bill accordingly. I thought to have deferr'd any Notice of this important Affair 'till the end of this Seſſion; at which time I propos'd to deliver a particular Account of the great and uſeful Things already perform'd by this preſent Parliament. But in compliance to thoſe who give themſelves the Trouble of adviſing me; and partly convinced by the Reaſons they offer; I am content to beſtow a Paper upon a Subject, that indeed ſo well deſerves it.

The Clergy, and whoever elſe have a true Concern for the Conſtitution of the Church, cannot but be highly pleas'd with one Proſpect in this new Scene of Publick Affairs. They may very well remember the Time, when every Seſſion of Parliament, was like a Cloud hanging over their Heads; and if it happen'd to paſs without burſting into ſome Storm upon the Church, we thank'd God, and thought it an happy Eſcape 'till the next Meeting; upon which we reſum'd our ſecret Apprehenſions, tho' we were not allow'd to believe any Danger. Things are now alter'd; the Parliament takes the Neceſſities of the Church into Conſideration, receives the Propoſals of the Clergy met in Convocation, and amidſt all the Exigencies *of a long expenſive War*, and *under the Preſſure of heavy Debts*, finds a Supply for erecting Fifty Edifices for the Service of God. And it appears by the Addreſs of the Commons to Her Majeſty upon this Occaſion (wherein they diſcover'd a true Spirit of Religion) that the applying the Mony granted *to accompliſh ſo excellent a Deſign*, would, in their Opinion, be the moſt effectual way of carrying on the War: That it would (to uſe their own Words) *be a Means of drawing down Bleſſings on Her Majeſty's Undertakings, as it adds to the number of thoſe Places, where the Prayers of Her devout and faithful Subjects, will be daily offer'd up to God, for the Proſperity of her Government at Home, and the Succeſs of Her Arms Abroad.*

I am ſometimes hoping, that we are not naturally ſo bad a People, as we have appear'd for ſome Years paſt. *Faction*, in order to ſupport it ſelf, is generally forc'd to make Uſe of ſuch abominable Inſtruments, that as long as it prevails, the Genius of a Nation is over-preſs'd, and cannot appear to exert it ſelf: But when That is broke and ſuppreſs'd, when Things return to the old Courſe, Mankind will naturally fall to act from Principles of Reaſon and Religion. The *Romans*, upon a great Victory, or eſcape from publick Danger, frequently built a Temple in Honour of ſome God, to whoſe peculiar Favour they imputed their Succeſs or Delivery: And ſometimes the *General* did the like, *at his own Expence*, to acquit himſelf of ſome pious Vow he had made. How little of any thing reſembling this hath been done by us after all our Victories! and perhaps for that Reaſon, among others, they have turn'd to ſo little Account. But what could we expect? We acted all along as if we believ'd nothing of a God or His Providence; and therefore it was conſiſtent to offer up our Edifices only to *Thoſe*, whom we look'd upon as *Givers of all Victory*, in his ſtead.

I have computed, that Fifty Churches may be built by a Medium, at Six Thouſand Pound for a Church; which is ſomewhat *under* the Price of a *Subject's Palace*: Yet perhaps the Care of above Two Hundred Thouſand Souls, with the Benefit of their Prayers for the Proſperity of their Queen and Country, may be almoſt put in the Balance with the Domeſtick Convenience, or even Magnificence of any *Subject* whatſoever.

Sir *William Petty*, who under the Name of Captain *Graunt*, Publiſh'd ſome Obſervations upon Bills of Mortality about five Years after the *Reſtoration*; tells us, the Pariſhes in *London*, were even then ſo unequally divided, that ſome were Two Hundred times larger than others. Since that Time, the encreaſe of Trade, the frequency of Parliaments, the deſire of living in the Metropolis, together with that Genius for Building, which began after the *Fire*, and hath ever ſince continu'd, have prodigiouſly enlarg'd this Town on all Sides, where it was capable of Encreaſe; and thoſe Tracts of Land built into Streets, have generally continu'd of the ſame Pariſh they belong'd to, while they lay in Fields; ſo that the Care of above Thirty Thouſand Souls, hath been ſometimes committed to one Miniſter, whoſe Church wou'd hardly contain the Twentieth part of his Flock: Neither, I think, was any Family in thoſe Pariſhes oblig'd to pay above a Groat a Year to their Spiritual Paſtor. Some few of thoſe Pariſhes have been ſince divided; in others were erected Chapels of Eaſe, where a Preacher is maintain'd by general Contribution. Such poor Shifts and Expedients, to the infinite Shame and Scandal, of ſo vaſt and flouriſhing a City, have been thought ſufficient for the Service of God and Religion; as if they were Circumſtances wholly indifferent.

This Defect, among other Conſequences of it, hath made *Schiſm* a ſort of neceſſary Evil, there being at leaſt Three Hundred Thouſand Inhabitants in this Town, whom the Churches would not be able to contain, if the People were ever ſo well diſpos'd: And in a City not overſtock'd with Zeal, the only way to preſerve any Degree of Religion, is to make all Attendance upon the Duties of it, as eaſy and cheap as poſſible: Whereas on the contrary, in the larger Pariſhes, the Preſs is ſo great, and the Pew-keeper's Tax ſo exorbitant, that thoſe who love to ſave Trouble and Mony, either ſtay at home, or retire to the *Conventicles*. I believe there are few Examples in any *Chriſtian* Country of ſo great a Neglect for Religion; and the Diſſenting Teachers have made their Advantages largely by it, *Sowing Tares among the Wheat while Men ſlept*; being much more expert at procuring Contributions, which is a Trade they are bred up in, than Men of a liberal Education.

And to ſay Truth, the Way practic'd by ſeveral Pariſhes in and about this Town, of maintaining their Clergy by voluntary Subſcriptions, is not only an Indignity to the Character, but hath many pernicious Conſequences attending it; ſuch a precarious Dependance, ſubjecting a Clergyman, who hath not more than ordinary Spirit and Reſolution, to many Inconveniences, which are obvious to imagine: But this Defect will, no doubt, be Remedied by the Wiſdom and Piety of the preſent Parliament; and a Tax laid upon every Houſe in a Pariſh, for the Support of their Paſtor. Neither indeed can it be conceiv'd, why a Houſe, whoſe Purchaſe is not reckon'd above one Third leſs than Land of the ſame Yearly Rent, ſhould not pay a Twentieth Part annually (which is half Tyth) to the Support of the Miniſter. One Thing I could wiſh, that in fixing the Maintenance to the ſeveral Miniſters in theſe new intended Pariſhes, no determinate Sum of Mony may be nam'd, which in all Perpetuities ought by any means to

be

be avoided; but rather a Tax in Proportion to the Rent of each Houſe, tho' it be but a Twentieth or even a Thirtieth part. The contrary of this, I am told, was done in ſeveral Pariſhes of the City after the *Fire*; where the Incumbent and his Succeſſors were to receive for ever a certain Sum; for Example, one or two hundred Pounds a Year. But the Lawgivers did not conſider, that what we call at preſent, One Hundred Pounds, will, in proceſs of time, have not the intrinſick value of Twenty; as Twenty Pounds now are hardly equal to Forty Shillings, Three Hundred Years ago. There are a thouſand Inſtances of this all over *England*, in reſerv'd Rents apply'd to Hoſpitals, in old Chiefries, and even among the Clergy themſelves, in thoſe Payments which, I think, they call a *Modus*.

As no Prince had ever better Diſpoſitions than her preſent Majeſty, for the advancement of true Religion, ſo there was never any Age that produc'd greater Occaſions to employ them on. Tis an unſpeakable Misfortune, that any Deſigns of ſo excellent a Queen, ſhou'd be check'd by the Neceſſities of a long and ruinous War, which the Folly or Corruption of *Modern Politicians* have involv'd us in, againſt all the Maxims whereby our Country flouriſh'd ſo many Hundred Years. Elſe Her Majeſty's Care of Religion would certainly have reach'd even to Her *American* Plantations. Thoſe noble Countries, ſtock'd by Numbers from hence, whereof too many are in no very great Reputation for Faith or Morals, will be a perpetual Reproach to us, 'till ſome better Care is taken for cultivating *Chriſtianity* among them. If the Governours of thoſe ſeveral Colonies were obliged, at certain Times, to tranſmit an exact Repreſentation of the State of Religion, in their ſeveral Diſtricts; and the Legiſlature here would, in a time of Leiſure, take that Affair under their Conſideration, it might be perfected with little Difficulty, and be a great Addition to the Glories of Her Majeſty's Reign.

But to wave further Speculations upon ſo remote a Scene, while we have Subjects enough to employ them on at Home; it is to be hop'd, the Clergy will not let ſlip any proper Opportunity of improving the pious Diſpoſitions of the Queen and Kingdom, for the Advantage of the Church; when by the Example of Times paſt, they conſider how rarely ſuch Conjunctures are like to happen. What if ſome Method were thought on towards repairing of Churches? For which there is like to be too frequent Occaſions, thoſe ancient *Gothick* Structures, throughout this Kingdom, going every Year to decay. That Expedient of repairing or rebuilding them by charitable Collections, ſeems in my Opinion not very ſuitable, either to the Dignity and Uſefulneſs of the Work, or to the Honour of our Country; ſince it might be ſo eaſily done, with very little Charge to the Publick, in a much more Decent and Honourable Manner, while Parliaments are ſo frequently call'd. But theſe and other Regulations muſt be left to a Time of *Peace*, which I ſhall humbly preſume to wiſh may ſoon be our Share, however offenſive it may be to any, either *abroad* or *at home*, who are Gainers by the War.

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